

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently amended) An isolated antibody comprising at least one the V_H complementarity determining region (CDR) 3 (CDR3) of the V_H or V_L region of a human antibody comprising the amino acid sequence encoded by the DNA sequence of SEQ ID NO:2 or having amino acids 98-106 of SEQ ID NO:4, as a CDR1, CDR2 or CDR3 sequence that which antibody specifically recognizes a conformation-dependent epitope of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) glycoprotein E2 and precipitates covalently or non-covalently associated E2/E1 complexes.

2. (Maintained) The antibody of claim 1, wherein said isolated antibody is a monoclonal antibody, one of a polyclonal antiserum, chimeric antibody, humanized antibody, synthetic antibody, antibody fragment, or a chemically modified derivative thereof.

3. (Cancelled)

4. (Currently amended) An isolated monoclonal antibody specifically recognizing the same conformation-dependent epitope of HCV E2 or antigen as the antibody of claim 1 ~~or 2~~, which epitope is present on HCV genotypes 1a, 1b, 2a, 3a and 4.

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Cancelled)
10. (Cancelled)
11. (Cancelled)
12. (Cancelled)
13. (Cancelled)
14. (Cancelled)
15. (Cancelled)
16. (Cancelled)
17. (Maintained) A neutralization assay for inhibiting the binding of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) glycoprotein E2 to target cells using the antibody of claim 1 or 2 comprising contacting said virus with said antibody and determining whether binding of HCV to target cells is inhibited.
18. (Cancelled)
19. (Cancelled)
20. (Cancelled)
21. (Cancelled)
22. (Cancelled)
23. (Cancelled)

24. (Currently Amended) A neutralization assay for inhibiting the ~~biding~~ binding of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) glycoprotein E2 to target cells using the antibody of claim ~~1 or 2~~ 4 comprising contacting said virus with said antibody and determining whether binding of HCV to target cells is inhibited.

25. (New) The isolated antibody of claim 1 further comprising the V_H CDR1 having amino acids 31-35 of SEQ ID NO:4, and the V_H CDR2 having amino acids 50-65 of SEQ ID NO:4, and the V_L CDR1 having amino acids 23-33 of SEQ ID NO:2, the V_L CDR2 having amino acids 49-55 of SEQ ID NO:2 and the V_L CDR3 having amino acids 88-98 of SEQ ID NO:2.

26. (New) The isolated antibody of claim 1 comprising the V_H amino acid sequence SEQ ID NO:4.

27. (New) The isolated antibody of claim 1 comprising the V_H amino acid sequence SEQ ID NO:4 and the V_L amino acid sequence SEQ ID NO:2.

28. (New) The isolated antibody of claim 27 which is a human monoclonal antibody.

29. (New) An isolated antibody recognizing the same conformation-dependent epitope of HCV E2 as the antibody of claim 28.

30. (New) A neutralization assay for inhibiting the binding of Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) glycoprotein E2 to target cells using the antibody of any one of the claims 27 to 29 comprising contacting said virus with said antibody and determining whether the binding of HCV to target cells is inhibited.